

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with Gwen Ifill

PERSON

Ifill, Gwen

Alternative Names: Gwen Ifill;

Life Dates: September 29, 1955-November 14, 2016

Place of Birth: New York, New York, USA

Residence: Washington, DC

Work: Arlington, VA

Occupations: Newspaper Reporter; Television News Reporter

Biographical Note

PBS-TV journalist Gwen Ifill was born on September 29, 1955 in New York City to her parents, O. Urcille Ifill, Sr., an African Methodist Episcopal minister who hailed from Panama, and her mother, Eleanor Husbunds from Barbados. Her father's ministry required the family to live in several cities in different church parsonages throughout New England including

Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York, where the family resided in federally subsidized housing. Ifill's interest in journalism was rooted in her parents' insistence that their children gather nightly in front of the television to watch the national news. In 1973, Ifill graduated from Classical High School in Springfield, Massachusetts. Four years later, she received her B.A. degree in communications from Simmons College in Boston. During her senior year, she interned at the Boston Herald American newspaper.

Ifill worked at the Boston Herald American newspaper as a reporter in 1977. She left in 1980 to work as a writer for the Baltimore Evening Sun where she was able to work as a political reporter. In 1984, Ifill moved to Washington D.C. to work as a political reporter for the Washington Post where she covered the suburban Maryland beat until 1988, when she was promoted to the national news desk and sent to report on the Republican National Convention. Ifill then accepted a position as White House correspondent for the New York Times in 1991. She went on to NBC News in 1994 and worked in the Washington, D.C. bureau as chief Congressional and political correspondent. In 1999, Ifill became the first African American woman to host a prominent political talk show on national television when she became moderator and managing editor of PBS's Washington Week and senior political correspondent for The PBS NewsHour. In 2004, Ifill moderated the vice-presidential debate between Republican Vice President Dick Cheney and Democrat Senator John Edwards, and in 2008, she moderated the vice-presidential debate between Democratic Senator Joe Biden and Republican Governor Sarah Palin.

Ifill was the recipient of numerous awards including the George Foster Peabody Award and the Leonard Zeidenberg First Amendment Award. Her book *The Breakthrough: Politics and Race in the Age of Obama*, was published in 2009.

Gwen Ifill was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on

March 8, 2012.

Ifill passed away on November 14, 2016.

Related Entries

Simmons College [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

B.A.

Springfield Central High School [STUDENTOF]

[from ? to ?]

The PBS NewsHour [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from ? to ?]

senior political correspondent, host, managing editor

Boston Herald American [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1977 to 1980]

Intern - Reporter

Baltimore Evening Sun [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1980 to 1984]

Politics Reporter

Washington Post [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1984 to 1991]

Reporter

New York Times [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1991 to 1994]

White House Reporter

NBC News [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1994 to 1999]

chief congressional and political correspondent

PBS Washington Week [EMPLOYEEOF]

[from 1999 to ?]

moderator and managing editor

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Honorary Member

Harvard Institute of Politics [MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Washington Association of Black Journalists (WABJ)

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member

National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ)

[MEMBEROF]

[from ? to ?]

Member